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2 June 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Senator Stennis on 29 May 1973

1. At my request, I called on Senator Stennis to present my respects after my nomination. Senator Stennis was his usual courtly self, despite the continued annoyance of the aftereffects of his wounds. After preliminary general comments, we covered the following matters which should be noted.

2. Senator Stennis spoke most strongly that I must stand up to the military in assessments and in budgetary aspects. He agreed that I would be assisted by the presence as Secretary of Defense of the author of the President's memorandum. I also pointed out that my service in Vietnam in the military command had given me some exposure to the military.

3. We discussed the Watergate a bit. The Senator stressed the desirability that CIA stay out of domestic activities, and I concurred.

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I hope to repair the Agency's relationship with the FBI as soon as it receives new leadership. In the course of this conversation, I mentioned the statutory restriction against domestic activities by the Agency but also volunteered that there was one phrase which has some ambiguity, i. e., protection of intelligence sources and methods. I said that I view this as a charge upon me but not an authority for positive action. If I had a problem in the protection of intelligence sources

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and methods, I saw my duty as going to the appropriate authorities with that concern and not undertaking action by the Agency. The Senator indicated considerable pleasure at this, stating that he had been thinking of the possibility of clarifying legislation with respect to this clause, which has some ambiguity as to whether it provides authority or not. He welcomed my indication that I do not look at it with this possibility in view.

4. With respect to performance in my new role, I commented that the Senator did not need a lot of general language from me but, rather, that I come to him after a year and show him real results. The Senator agreed with this, and particularly indicated his interest that these results show savings in the sums devoted to intelligence. I pointed out that this is inevitably going to involve reductions in personnel as the only possible variable which could give reductions and still permit the continuation of programs. He concurred, with particular attention to military personnel in view of the retirement and other benefits involved.

5. With respect to my confirmation hearings, I said that I am completely amenable to whether these should be open or closed. I assured the Senator, in response to his question, that I could give a general answer to an indelicate question and promise to give the details in executive session. The Senator expressed considerable concern over the degree of publicity the Agency is receiving and a preference for closed sessions where possible, although he said that this decision would be in the hands of Acting Chairman Symington. I said that I had told Senator Symington that the decision as to the hearing would be up to him and that I would abide by his decision. Senator Stennis mentioned the possibility of an open-budget item, and I said that we had generally hoped this would not be necessary for tactical reasons but that we have no fundamental security rationale why a general total could not be included. The Senator mentioned that the House has a position on this to consider as well.

6. I mentioned to the Senator that Mr. Schlesinger had been concerned at the way in which individual driblets of information on the Watergate case had come out and that consequently we had undertaken a rather intensive search to identify the various skeletons in the Agency's

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closet. I stressed that these had been collected and reflect totally different political atmospheres, different Presidents, and different Directors. I said I certainly had no desire to spread these on the public record but that I was quite prepared to give a full account of these to the Senator for his background information. I pointed out that some of these activities in the past probably should not have been done, others were perhaps appropriate but subject to misunderstanding, and others were really quite within the Agency's charter. I said that we intend to terminate those activities which in our opinion are improper and clarify the rationale behind any that are subject to misunderstanding. At the Senator's suggestion, I gave him a very general oral outline of this collection of cases without undue identification of specifics, although prepared to enter into details at any time. The Senator listened, clarified various aspects, and at the end expressed his agreement with the concept that some of these be terminated and that the package be held on a restricted basis. He asked what Senator Symington's reaction had been when we went over these, and I stated that he had indicated concern over some and understanding of the rationale behind others.

7. The Senator indicated that I should not have too much trouble with the Phoenix aspect of the confirmation hearings. He offered his full support in my new responsibilities and accepted my suggestion that we look at the record a year from now.

WEC

W. E. Colby

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